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ABSTRACT

Prior to fall 1993, students at California's College of the Canyons had until the 11th or 12th week of a 17 or 18 week semester to drop or withdraw from a course. In spring 1993, the state Academic Senate recommended that the drop deadline be changed to the 8th week. Students were notified of the new withdrawal deadline on the college calendar, in the schedule of classes, and by faculty. A study was conducted to examine student behavior from fall 1989 to fall 1993 to determine any noticeable changes after the new withdrawal deadline. Findings included the following: (1) in fall 1993, students withdrew from 2,683 courses, compared to an average of 4,090 for the four previous fall semesters; (2) withdrawals declined by nearly 32% from fall 1992; (3) 12,811 courses, or 72.3%, were passed in fall 1993, the highest number in the 5 years studied; and (4) fall 1993 also had the highest number and percentage of failed courses of the study period with 2,222. Recommendations include continuing to monitor course grades and withdrawals; encouraging faculty to make appointments with students who are doing less than C+ work, since research has shown student who are in most need of assistance are least likely to ask for help; and encouraging faculty to examine their course timelines to see if they are providing students with an indication of satisfactory or unsatisfactory work prior to the drop deadline. (Includes information on the drop deadline and a letter supporting the study.) (KP)

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College of the Canyons
Santa Clarita Community College District

EXAMINING THE EARLIER DROP DEADLINE

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April 1994

Office of Institutional Development

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EXAMINING THE EARLIER DROP DEADLINE

Prior to Fall 1993, students at College of the Canyons had until the 11th or 12th week of a 17 or 18 week semester to drop or withdraw from a course.

In Spring 1993, the Academic Senate recommended to the Board of Trustees that the Drop Deadline be revised and changed to the 8th week of classes. The Academic Senate reasoned that the former deadline allowed a student more than ample time to decide whether (s)he was planning to complete the course and, for some students, delayed the decision to drop until just prior to the deadline. The Board approved the recommended revision.

The new deadline was first instituted in Fall 1993. At the time of its approval, the Board requested that the Academic Senate submit a report on the impact of the earlier deadline after the completion of the first semester of use.

DROP/WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

Once a student decides to drop or withdraw from a course, (s)he must complete a Drop Form and turn it in to the Admissions and Records Office to officially notify the college that (s)he no longer wishes to be enrolled in a course. In this way the student avoids being given an "F" grade for failing to attend and complete all the necessary coursework that would have been due during the remainder of the class. If the student completes the Drop Form prior to the deadline, a "W" is recorded on his/her transcript to signify that (s)he has withdrawn from the course.

The college took the following steps to notify students of the new withdrawal deadline:

- Fall Schedule of Classes

  The new withdrawal deadline date was printed in the Important Dates section of the College Calendar and in the Add/Drop Procedures section of the Admissions and Enrollment Policies section of the Fall Schedule of Classes. See Attachment 1.

- First Notice to Faculty

  Faculty received notices on the first day of classes which asked them to announce the new withdrawal deadline to each of their classes.

- Second Notice to Faculty

During the third week of classes, faculty were given a second notice about the earlier drop deadline and were asked to make the announcement to all their classes.

QUESTIONS RAISED

The new withdrawal deadline could have had an impact on several different indicators. We assembled data over a four or five year period to see if there were noticeable changes in student behavior in Fall 1993, the first semester in which the college used the earlier drop deadline.

Question 1. Was there a change in the number and percentage of courses from which students withdrew in Fall 1993 from previous fall semesters?

Table 1 shows that students withdrew from fewer courses in Fall 1993 than in any of the four previous fall semesters. On the average, students withdrew from 4,090 courses during the four previous fall semesters. This compares to 2,683 withdrawals for Fall 1993. From Fall 1992 to Fall 1993, withdrawals declined by nearly 32 percent (3,939 to 2,683).

Since withdrawals are related to the total number of courses in which students enroll, we calculated withdrawals as a percentage of the total grades awarded and discovered that there was also a sizable decline in the percentage of withdrawals. While students withdrew from about 22 to 25 percent of their courses in Fall 1989 through Fall 1992, the percentage dropped to 15 in Fall 1993.

Table 1.

Number and Percentage of Courses Passed, Failed and Dropped, Fall 1989 to Fall 1993

	F89	F90	F91	F92	F93
Passed (A, B, C, D & CR)	10,515 (64.1%)	11,486 (66.4%)	11,962 (70.8%)	12,445 (69.5%)	12,811 (72.3%)
Failed (F, NC & Inc.)	1,751 (10.7%)	1,369 (7.9%)	1,084 (6.4%)	1,514 (8.5%)	2,222 (12.5%)
Withdrawals	4,130 (25.2%)	4,435 (25.7%)	3,858 (22.8%)	3,939 (22.0%)	2,683 (15.1%)
TOTAL*	16,396 (100.0%)	17,290 (100.0%	16,904 (100.0%)	17,898 (100.0%)	17,716 (100.0%)

* General Studies 094 excluded.

Findings:

- More courses were passed in fall 1993.
- More courses were failed in fall 1993.
- Fewer courses were dropped in fall 1993.

Source: SGR140 Report, Computer Center.

Expected Versus Actual Withdrawals

By using the Fall 1992 figures as the baseline, we calculated the expected number of withdrawals for Fall 1993. The 3,939 withdrawals in Fall 1992 represented 22.0 percent of the courses in which students were enrolled. If the proportions held true in Fall 1993, we could have expected that 3,898 students would have withdrawn (17,716 courses x 22% = 3,898). In Fall 1993 only 2,683 courses were dropped, or **1,215 fewer withdrawals than expected.**

Table 2.

Expected Versus Actual Grades
Fall 1992 versus Fall 1993

	Passed	Failed	Withdrawals	Total
Fall 1992	12,455 **(69.5%)**	1,514 **(8.5%)**	3,939 **(22.0%)**	17,898 **(100.0%**
Fall 1993 Expected	12,313 **(69.5%)**	1,505 **(8.5%)**	3,898 **(22.0%)**	17,716 **(100.0%)**
Fall 1993 Actual	12,811 **(72.3%)**	2,222 **(12.5%)**	2,683 **(15.1%)**	17,716 **(100.0%)**
Difference	**+498**	**+717**	**-1,215**	**0**

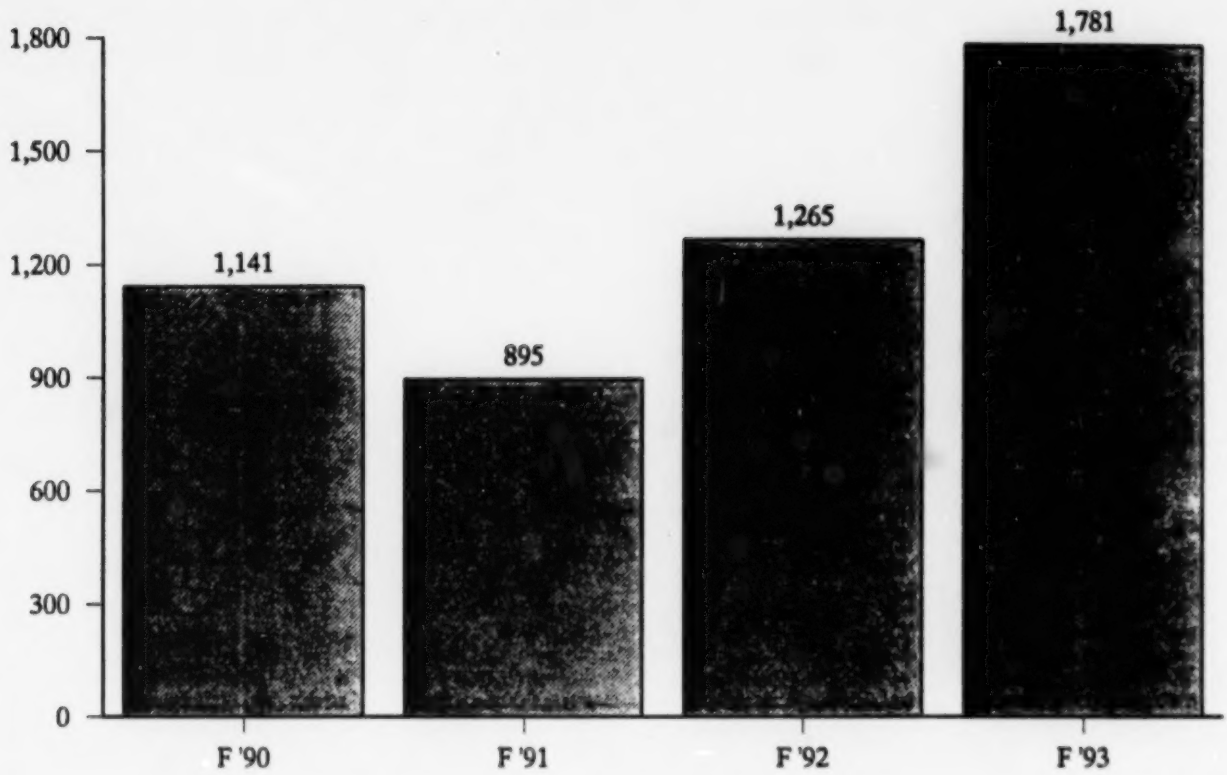
By examining Table 2 above, it is apparent that of the 1,200 fewer than expected withdrawals, there were approximately 500 more passed courses and 700 more failed courses.

Question 2. Was there a change in the number and percentage of "F" grades awarded in Fall 1993?

Figure 1 shows that students received more "F" grades in Fall 1993 than in any of the three previous fall semesters. On the average, 1,100 "F" grades were awarded during each of the previous fall semesters. This compares to 1,781 "F" grades awarded in Fall 1993. From Fall 1992 to Fall 1993, "F" grades increased by more than 40 percent (1,265 to 1,781).

The percentage of "F" grades also increased in Fall 1993. While "F" grades represented, on the average, 6.3 percent of the grades awarded in Fall 1990 to Fall 1992, the percentage increased to 10.1 percent in Fall 1993.

Figure 1.
Number of "F" Grades Awarded
Fall 1990 to Fall 1993



Total Grades Awarded*:	17,290	16,904	17,898	17,716
Number of "F" Grades:	1,141	895	1,265	1,781
F's as Percentage of Total Grades Awarded:	6.6%	5.3%	7.1%	10.1%

* General Studies 094 - Subject Matter Tutoring excluded from totals.

Source: Report SBLOCK, Grades Awarded, Computer Center, Fall 1990, Fall 1991, Fall 1992 and Fall 1993.

MAJOR FINDINGS

While there is not a causal relationship which can be proven between the earlier withdrawal deadline and the changes that have taken place in these indicators, it is clear that there were some major changes in grading that occurred from Fall 1992 to Fall 1993.

Major Finding 1: More courses were passed.

Major Finding 2: More courses were failed.

Major Finding 3: Fewer courses were dropped.

The major increase in failing grades is probably the most troublesome finding. The finding raises several questions. Was the increase in "F" grades the result of students not being adequately informed about the new drop deadline, or was it the result of enrolling a larger number of less qualified students? Unfortunately, our data do not tell us why the increase in "F" grades occurred.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The Academic Senate should continue to monitor course grading and withdrawal over the next year. Spring 1994 data can be added to Table 3 after the conclusion of the spring semester.

Recommendation 2. Since research has shown that students who are in the most need of assistance are least likely to avail themselves of opportunities for help, it would be beneficial to students if faculty made appointments with those individuals who are not doing better than C+ work in their classes. This might be incorporated as part of the proposed Early Alert System.

Recommendation 3. Faculty should examine their course timeline to see that they are providing students with a grade or an indication of whether they are doing satisfactory or unsatisfactory work in the course prior to the Drop Deadline.

Table 3.

Number and Percentage of Courses Passed, Failed and Dropped, Spring 1990 to Spring 1994

	S '90	S '91	S '92	S '93	S '94
Passed **(A, B, C, D & CR)**	10,331 **(65.6%)**	11,163 **(67.8%)**	12,164 **(71.2%)**	12,292 **(71.4%)**	
Failed **(F, NC & Inc.)**	1,252 **(7.9%)**	881 **(5.4%)**	1,433 **(8.4%)**	1,456 **(8.5%)**	
Withdrawals	4,175 **(26.5%)**	4,411 **(26.8%)**	3,485 **(20.4%)**	3,456 **(20.1%)**	
TOTAL*	15,758 **(100.0%)**	16,455 **(100.0%**	17,086 **(100.0%)**	17,204 **(100.0%)**	

* General Studies 094 excluded.

Source: SGR140 Report, Computer Center.

■ Eligibility for Admission

Applicants who are high school graduates or who are 18 years of age or over and give evidence that they are able to profit from the instruction offered may be admitted. Advanced standing credit will be allowed for all work completed at an accredited college or university. If the grade point average on previously attempted college work is below 2.0 (C average), the student will be placed on probation at entrance.

■ Admissions Procedure Application

A formal application for admission must be filed with the Office of Admissions and Records. This should be done as soon as the decision has been made by the individual to seek admission to the College.

■ Enrollment Responsibility

Students are held responsible for all classes for which they register. This includes attending all class sessions, being prompt in daily class attendance and meeting course requirements. If for some reason, a student must withdraw from a class (es), it is the students responsibility to properly withdraw. This means coming to campus and picking up a Drop Form or a Complete Withdrawal Form from the Admissions and Records office, accurately and thoroughly completing the card and filing it with the Admissions and Records Office. The official date of withdrawal is the date on which the withdrawal form is filed with the Admissions and Records office.

■ Attend First Class Meeting

It is very important to attend the first scheduled class meeting, in order to retain space in class. It is at that time that the course objectives, instructor's standards, and grading policies are explained. This orientation is significant towards establishing responsibility to succeed in the course. If a student fails to attend the first class meeting and there are people on the class waiting list, they may be dropped from the class.

■ Full or Part-Time Student Classification

For most purposes, the official designation of a "full-time" student is one who is enrolled in 12 or more semester units, while a "part-time" student is one who is enrolled in fewer than 12 semester units.

■ Add/Drop Procedures

1. Add/Drop or Complete Withdrawal forms are available at the Admissions and Records Office.
2. When dropping a class, accurately complete the Drop Form, especially the class code number and the class section number. Turn the form in at one of the windows in the Admissions and Records Office.
3. When adding a class, accurately complete the Add Form. Carefully check the class code number and the class section number. After checking to make sure that the class is still open, and receiving the instructor's signature, turn in the Add Form at one of the windows in the Admissions and Records Office.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Students must turn in "Add" cards immediately upon receiving signed approval from instructor. (ADD cards will only be valid for one week upon date of instructor's signature.)

The ADD deadline for Fall Semester, 1993 is Friday, September 27, 1993.

No ADD cards will be accepted after the add deadline except for verified emergency situations.

4. Drop Deadline for Fall Semester 1993 is Friday, October 15, 1993.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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College Calendar

FALL SEMESTER
August 19 - December 17, 1993

Thursday, August 19	Instruction Begins
Monday, September 6	Labor Day
Friday, September 17	Add Deadline
Friday, October 15	Drop Deadline
Friday, November 12	Veteran's Day
Monday - Friday, December 13 - 17	Final Examinations
Friday, December 17	Instruction Ends
December 21, 1993 - January 7, 1994	Winter Recess

IMPORTANT DATES

Continuing & Returning Student Registration	Nov. 18 - Dec. 17
Registration for Returning Students	January 4 - 21
New Student Testing & Orientation	May - Aug. see Counseling for Appt.
New Student Registration	June & Aug. see Counseling for Appt.
Late Registration	August 10 - 17
Change of Program	August 10 - 17
Add Deadline	September 17
Drop Deadline	October 15
Classes Begin	August 19
Deadline for filing for Graduation	September 30

WINTER INTERSESSION
January 10 - 21, 1994

Monday, January 10	Instruction Begins
Monday, January 17	Dr. Martin Luther King Day
Friday, January 21	Instruction Ends

SPRING SEMESTER
January 24 - May 27, 1994

Monday, January 24	Instruction Begins
Friday, February 18	Lincoln's Birthday
Monday, February 21	Washington's Birthday
Monday - Friday, March 28 - April 1	Spring Vacation
Monday - Friday, May 23 - 27	Final Examinations
Friday, May 27	Spring Semester Ends
Friday, May 27	Commencement

NOTE: STUDENTS MUST ATTEND FIRST MEETING OF CLASS.

The following are application deadlines for future NURSING PROGRAMS:

Aug. '94 & Jan. '95 Two-Year RN Program	* February 11, 1993
January '95 LVN to RN Career Ladder Students	* February 11, 1993
August '94 VN Program	* February 11, 1993, August 21, 1993

Check with Counseling for placement exam dates.

Application deadlines for career-mobility externships for RNs:

January '94 Operating Room RN Externship	November 10, 1993
August '93 Obstetrical RN Externship	June 24, 1993

college of the canyons

Office of Institutional Development
26455 N. Rockwell Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, California 91355

(805) 259-7800 Extension 328
FAX: (805) 259-8302

DATE: July 5, 1994

TO: Michael Dermody
Academic Senate

FROM: Nancy Mattice

RE: **MONITORING COURSE WITHDRAWAL DATA**

The enclosed table of Spring course grades from 1990 to 1994 provides additional follow-up on the impact of the revised drop deadline. Also included is Table 1, showing Fall 1989 to Fall 1993 course grading data, taken from Examining the Earlier Drop Deadline, April 1994.

WITHDRAWALS
Table 3 shows that students withdrew from fewer courses in Spring 1994 than in any of the previous four spring semesters. On the average, students withdrew from 3,882 courses during the previous spring semesters. This compares to 2,881 withdrawals for Spring 1994. In one years time, from Spring 1993 to Spring 1994, withdrawals declined 17 percent (3,456 to 2,881).

Withdrawals also declined as a percentage of total courses enrolled in Spring 1994. While students had withdrawn from 20 percent of their courses in the two previous spring semesters, the percentage declined to 18 in Spring 1994. Over the four year period, withdrawals declined from 27 to 18 percent.

COURSES PASSED
Total course enrollment in Spring 1994 approximated that of Spring 1990. More courses were passed in Spring 1994, however, than in Spring 1990. Passed courses also increased as a percentage of total courses enrolled in Spring 1994. While students had passed 66 percent of their courses in Spring 1990, the percentage increased to 70 in Spring 1994.

COURSES FAILED
Table 3 also shows that more courses were failed in Spring 1994 than in previous spring semesters. On the average, students failed 1,256 courses in the previous four spring

semesters. This compares to 1,803 failed courses in Spring 1994. In one years time, from Spring 1993 to Spring 1994, failures increased 24 percent (1,456 to 1,803).

Failures also increased as a percentage of total courses enrolled in Spring 1994. With the exception of Spring 1991, students have failed 8 or 9 percent of their enrolled courses in the previous spring semesters. The percentage increased to 11 in Spring 1994.

The Spring data, when combined with the Fall 1989 to Fall 1993 data in Table 1, provides an overall indication of the declining number of course withdrawals in the past four years. Several factors may be influencing this decline:

- o The increasing cost to attend College of the Canyons.
- o The increase in student enrollment.
- o The controlling of course growth through enrollment management.
- o The earlier drop deadline.

INCREASING COST
In Fall 1989 a student enrolling for a 3 unit course paid an enrollment fee of $15.00. In Spring 1994 the cost had jumped to $39.00, or, in the case of a student with a baccalaureate degree or higher, $150.00. By adding books and material expenses, the cost to attend a 3 unit class now approaches $100. Having made this larger investment at the beginning of the semester, a student may be less willing to drop a course.

INCREASING ENROLLMENT
Fall 1989 enrollment at First Census was 5,667 students. By Fall 1993, enrollment had increased to 6,225, an increase of 558 students or a 10 percent increase. More students are now in competition to enroll in about the same number or fewer course sections.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
Due to restricted state funding, the college implemented an enrollment management plan in 1991-92 which decreased the number of course sections by 2 percent. If we look at the data in Tables 1 and 3, there is a noticeable decrease in withdrawals between Fall 1990 and Fall 1991 (26% to 23%) and between Spring 1991 and Spring 1992 (27% to 20%). As the availability of courses decreased, students withdrew from fewer courses.

EARLIER DROP DEADLINE
Was there a change in the number and percentage of courses from which students withdrew after the earlier drop deadline was implemented in Fall 1993? From reviewing two semesters of data, the answer is yes. It is, however, difficult to say that this was the sole reason for the decline.

All four of these factors may be combining with yet other factors to cause a greater percentage of students to continue their course enrollments to the end of the semester.

Enclosure

cc: Dianne Van Hook
Carter Doran
Joe Gerda

Table 1.

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* General Studies 094 excluded.

Findings:

- More courses were passed in fall 1993 than in previous fall semesters.
- More courses were failed in fall 1993 than in previous fall semesters.
- Fewer courses were dropped in fall 1993 than in previous fall semesters.

Source: SGR140 Report, Computer Center.